

CONSTITUTION OF

FERNWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH OF SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA

Preamble

This Constitution is made to preserve the Authority of the Church.

This Church shall be a democracy subject to the provisions of this document, with every member having an equal voice and vote upon all matters pertaining to the management, policy, and operation of the Church. While the Church may delegate to its Pastor, Deacons, committees, and employed personnel any matter for consideration and action, the Church shall be and ever remain the final authority in the procedure and conduct of its affairs.

I. Name and Affiliation

Fernwood Baptist Church shall be affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of South Carolina and other denominational entities as the body decides.

II. Church Location

The physical address of the principal office of this Church shall be 200 Fernwood Drive, Spartanburg, South Carolina 29307.

III. Vision Statement of Fernwood Baptist Church

“Our vision is to be Christ to each other and our community—doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God.”

IV. The Mission of Fernwood Baptist Church

“Our Mission to be caring Christians offering personal ministry and a credible witness to the greater Spartanburg community. We are a family of faith seeking spiritual maturity, celebrating human diversity and creativity, and proclaiming God’s unconditional love.”

V. The Covenant of Fernwood Baptist Church

Consistent with its vision and in recognition of its mission, Fernwood Baptist Church has entered into the following Covenant, adopted December 10, 1978:

Identifying the Church as a community of individuals bound by faith in Jesus Christ,
Believing the Church to be a called-out body whose existence is in the world,
Acknowledging the Church as an instrument of God’s work in the world, and
Affirming the Church as the guardian and proclaimer of the new covenant between God and His people,
We the members of Fernwood Baptist Church,
Claiming ... the power of the Father,

Seeking ... the personality of the Son,
Trusting ... the presence of the Holy Spirit,
Commit Ourselves ...

TO WORSHIP & CELEBRATION, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us as a gathered community into a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, celebrating His presence and influence in our lives;

TO DISCIPLESHIP & GROWTH, letting our lifestyle declare a growing commitment to Christlikeness;

TO EDUCATION & TRAINING, engaging in a program of religious instruction that will increase and deepen our faith through the knowledge of the Bible, enable us to grow in Christian maturity, and develop the leadership necessary to be the people of God;

TO WITNESS & MISSION, exemplifying the abundant life of peace and grace that we enjoy through Jesus Christ by sharing the Gospel based on the principles of love and need;

TO MINISTRY & SERVICE, seeking through personal involvement an awareness of the spiritual and physical needs of the people in our areas of concern and responding to them in the name of Christ; and

TO LOVE & FELLOWSHIP, nurturing vital, growing personal relationships within our faith community through the bonds of common commitment to Christ.

VI. Church Membership

- A. All members are entitled to, and responsible for, all the rights and privileges laid out in this Constitution and in the Church Procedures. The membership reserves the right to determine who shall be members of the Church and the conditions for membership.

- B. Any person may offer themselves as a candidate for membership in the Church. All candidates for membership shall be presented to the Church at any Church service in any of the following ways:
 - 1. By profession of faith in Jesus Christ and request for baptism;
 - 2. By promise of a letter of recommendation from another Baptist Church;
 - 3. By statement of previous Christian experience and meaningful baptism;
 - 4. By agreeing to become a watch-care member. Watch-care members do not relinquish their membership in another church, but nevertheless wish to signal their commitment to this congregation. Watch-care members may not vote in Church conferences, serve as deacons, serve on the Ministry Council, serve on committees, or chair Ministry Teams.New members may be received by affirmation by the members present at any Church service.

- C. Under extraordinary circumstances, when it seems required, persons may be removed from membership by a vote of the congregation in conference, as specified in this document, Section IX.

VII. Church Officers

The following officers of the Church shall consist of ordained persons: Pastor, other Full-Time Ministerial Staff, and Deacons. The constitutional officers of the Church shall be the Pastor, who shall be called by the Church, the Chair of Deacons, a Church Clerk, and Church Treasurer. The Chair of Deacons and Treasurer shall attest with their signatures and seal of the Church all legal instruments of the Church requiring the same. The Church shall elect such additional officers as shall be necessary to carry on the Church business properly.

A. Pastor and Other Ordained Full-Time Ministerial Staff

The Pastor shall be recognized as the spiritual leader of the Church. It is the Pastor's responsibility to fill the pulpit at all regularly scheduled worship services of the Church. The Pastor shall exercise general supervision over the affairs of the Church unless otherwise provided for by the Deacons or the Church in conference. The Pastor will be primarily responsible in the areas of worship, pastoral care, outreach, stewardship, administration, and other duties as specified in the job description. Other Ministerial Staff may be called by the Church as necessary to fulfill its mission.

The Pastor and Ministerial Staff shall be called for an indefinite period. Their services may end by resignation, death, disability, or Church action. If performance deficiencies are identified, then an improvement plan should be developed by the Diaconate, working with the Personnel Committee, to resolve these deficiencies. If the issues cannot be rectified, action may be taken to remove the staff member, as specified in this document, Section IX.

B. Deacons

The Church shall elect from the membership a Diaconate (herein also called Deacons) consisting of such number as shall be authorized by the congregation who shall serve for a term of three years.

1. **Duties.** The Deacons shall be responsible for long range planning, for the pastoral care and spiritual life of the Church, supervision of the Pastor, and for maintaining the Church's relationships with external organizations in the community. The Deacons shall be available to serve in an advisory capacity to the Pastor and to any Church committee or Ministry Team requesting such assistance. Reports from Standing Committees, unless otherwise directed by Church action, shall be submitted to the Deacons for their attention. The Deacons shall address all matters referred to them by the Church, the various committees, the Pastor, or the members of the Church, as well as any matters they may elect in their discretion to consider. They may make recommendations and reports to the Church as they shall deem to be in the best interests of the Church and furtherance of the Lord's work.

2. Eligibility and Selection. A Deacon nominee shall be at least 21 years of age and an active member of the Church for one year prior to their nomination. Only one member of a household may serve in the Diaconate at a time. Neither employees nor family members of Full-Time Ministerial Staff are eligible to serve in the Diaconate.

C. Church Clerk and Assistant Church Clerk

The Church shall elect from its membership a Clerk, whose duties shall be to perform such services incident to that office and take minutes of all business meetings and conferences of the Church.

The Church shall elect from its membership an Assistant Clerk whose duties shall be to perform the duties of the Church Clerk in the Clerk's absence.

D. Church Treasurer and Assistant Church Treasurer

The Church shall elect from its membership a Treasurer who shall have custody of all moneys and securities of the Church and shall furnish bond at the expense of the Church in such amount as shall be fixed and designated by the Church.

There will also be an Assistant Treasurer elected by the Church who will be one of three individuals who will countersign all checks. All checks are to be countersigned by two of the three following persons: Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, or the designated member of the clerical staff as designated by the Pastor.

VIII. Other Church Employees

- A. Clerical Staff
- B. Non-Ministerial Staff
- C. Contractual/Temporary

IX. Church Conferences

- A. The Church shall be called into conference to: 1) approve an annual Ministry Plan 2) approve an annual slate of officers/teachers/committee members 3) select Deacons 4) call or remove Full-Time Ordained Ministerial Staff 5) remove Church members 6) amend this Constitution.
- B. Church Conferences of the members of the Church may be held as often as necessary to administer the affairs of the Church. Such conferences may be called by the Pastor, Chair of Deacons, or upon the written request of not less than 25 members. Notice of such special Church conference shall be given to the congregation in the official Church newsletter or bulletin not less than two weeks prior to the date called. The Chair of Deacons, or some member designated by the Chair, shall act as moderator.

- C. For any action to be effective, a quorum must be present. A quorum will consist of 51% of the average worship attendance for the previous twelve months.
- D. With the exception of the selection of Deacons, these actions require a two-thirds majority of members present and voting. The Deacon selection process is specified in Church Procedures.

X. Church Organization

The Church shall organize itself around committees and ministry teams, The current organization is outlined in Church Procedures. Members of Fernwood Baptist Church are welcomed to attend all official Church committee, ministry team meetings, and meetings of the Diaconate unless the meeting has been designated as an executive session.

XI. Search Committees for Pastor and Other Ministerial Staff

- A. When the position of Pastor is vacant, the Diaconate will be responsible for establishing interim responsibilities related to worship leadership and pastoral care in the interim period. The Diaconate may recommend the establishment of a Transition Team to aid in the transition process. The Diaconate, in consultation with the Transition Team, if applicable, or with the Interim Pastor, will provide for the election of a Pastor Search Committee, composed of seven members selected in the same manner by which Deacons are selected. The Pastor Search Committee shall be charged with the responsibility of seeking and recommending a suitable Pastor to the congregation. When the position of Pastor is filled, a Pastor Relations Committee will be formed to support and shepherd the new Pastor and family.
- B. When there is a vacancy in any Full-Time Ordained Ministerial Staff position, the Pastor, in cooperation with the Deacons and Personnel Committee, may recommend a candidate or the formation of a Search Committee to be approved by the congregation.
- C. When the Church is without a full-time Pastor, an Interim Pastor may be called to fulfill the duties of the Pastor until the search process has been concluded. The Diaconate will be responsible for hiring and overseeing the Interim Pastor, utilizing guidance from the Personnel and Finance Committees. The Interim Pastor will be ineligible to be considered by the Pastor Search Committee as a candidate to serve as Pastor.

XII. Pastor Relations Committee

The Pastor Relations Committee shall be charged to support and provide non-financial resources for the Pastor and family.

XIII. Protecting Fernwood's Children

Church members who volunteer to work with children at the Church facility or Church-related functions, as well as members of the Church staff, are required to submit to a background check, to be repeated at three-year intervals. In addition, a DSS "Central Registry Check" is required.

This is to be coordinated by the Church's administrative staff. In addition, training will be offered to prepare these individuals to work with our children.

XIV. Ordinances

- A. For persons requesting baptism, baptism by immersion shall be the Church's practice. The Church believes immersion to be the New Testament mode which best portrays the meaning of baptism – death to old life and resurrection to a new life. An accommodation in mode, however, may be made for persons with physical or mental limitations that would prohibit baptism by immersion. A request for such an accommodation shall be submitted to the Pastor for approval.
- B. The Lord's Supper shall be observed at least quarterly and any other times deemed appropriate by the Pastor.

XV. Incidental Matters

In all incidental matters which require neither a meeting of the Deacons nor a Church conference, the Pastor and Chair of Deacons shall have power to act.

XVI. Rules of Order

Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised shall be the official guide in all matters not specifically covered in this document, unless the majority in Church conference act to adopt another rule of order.

XVII. Amendment

This Constitution may be amended or repealed by the Church at any annual or special Church conference which has been called for that purpose.

Issues not specifically addressed in this Constitution shall be addressed in the Church Procedures.

Ratified by action of the Church in its business meeting on _____(date)